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ABSTRACT

A distinction is drawn between two value systems: (1) idealistic, in which societal ideals and values are accepted as literal, moral values; and (2) pragmatic, in which values are utilitarian and norms are seen as probablistic rather than prescriptive. It was hypothesized that when expectations of fairness are disconfirmed, persons holding idealistic values would be more dissatisfied and more willing to take action to restore justice than would persons holding pragmatic values. In the experiment described, the Ss, after witnessing a judge favor his friend in a contest, thereby disconfirming expectations of the judge's fairness, reacted as hypothesized. (TL)

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Reactions of Idealists and Pragmatists to Expectancy Disconfirmation: Who will Change Society?

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This paper describes the development and testing of a hypothesis concerning the implications of individual differences in values. Two value systems are postulated: 1) idealistic, in which societal ideals and values are accepted as literal, moral values, and 2) pragmatic, in which values are utilitarian and norms are seen as probabilistic rather than prescriptive. Typical idealistic values are fairness, justice, and honesty; typical pragmatic values are success, adjustment, and efficiency. An individual's values are assumed to be more important to him than more specific and less enduring attitudes and behaviors.

A further postulate is that values are related to expectations of others' behavior, as people assume others are basically like themselves. Differences in expectations are often caused by differences in values. According to dissonance researchers, disconfirmation of expectation is unpleasant. The amount of unpleasant affect depends in part on the importance of the expectation to the person. Disconfirmation of an expectation derived from an individual's values should cause greater discomfort than disconfirmation of non-value-related expectations.

Thus, in certain situations involving disconfirmation of expectation, idealists and pragmatists, whose values and expectations differ in content and importance, should react differently. Specifically, it was hypothesized that when fairness expectations are disconfirmed, idealists should be more dissatisfied and more willing to take action to restore justice than pragmatists. This is because fairness is valued by idealists, so that fairness expectations are value-related for idealists.

Before describing the experiment which was designed to test the hypothesis, I'd like to mention a few more things about idealism-pragmatism. Webster's dictionary defines an idealist as "one who places ideals before practical considerations." Table 1 in the hand-out shows some of the other postulated

CG 006 562

differences between idealists and pragmatists. The list is not exhaustive. The firat dichotomy refers to the basic differences in the values of idealists and pragmatists. The remaining differences are consequences of this basic difference in values. The second dichotomy refers to a tendency for idealists to use prescriptive admonitions, while pragmatists use probability estimates for many of society's norms. For example, the idealist would say "one should be honest," while the pragmatist would say "one is usually honest." In the third case the pragmatist uses situation ethics, while the idealist endeavors to apply his ethical principles in all situations. The final distinction is a result of the first and second differences. Both idealists and pragmatists become personally angry when their value-related expectations are violated. Since the idealist also believes that his values represent the desires of society, he sees violations of his value-related expectations as misbehaviors against society, and thus experiences social anger as well as personal anger.

I hope this helps to clarify what the idealism-pragmatism dimension represents. In order to avoid misunderstanding, however, I'll add two things which are not included in the conception of idealism-pragmatism. First, an idealist is not a rigid, old-fashioned, moralist. Secondly, a pragmatist is not merely an opportunist.

In order to test the hypothesis, an idealism-pragmatism attitude inventory was devised. The scale used in the present study contained 18 items in a seven-point Likert format. Some of the items were taken or modified from other sources; some were original to this scale. To give a better idea, here are a few of the items: "Playing by the rules is more important than winning." Agreement indicates idealism. "The most important function of education is as a preparation for practical achievement." --a pragmatic item. "One should be honest but not in all things." (pragmatic) "Peace Corps volunteers illustrate the fact that ideals are worth working for." (idealistic) In scoring,

the pragmatic items are reversed, so a high score on the scale indicates idealism. These items were selected from two earlier versions of the scale on the basis of factor analysis and item-total correlations. The split-half reliability is .72 (after the Spearman-Brown correction).

Testing the hypothesis : The experimental situation exemplified the dictum that "it's not what you know but who you know that counts." Subjects in the experimental condition witnessed a judge show favoritism to his friend.

The subjects believed they were participating in a study of group creativity. They were also told the the creativity test which they took would later be used to place future freshmen in courses. This established the possibility of negative implications of the injustice for future students. Early in the session the confederate judge of the creativity test problems was introduced as a graduate student from another department. When questioned, he revealed acquaintance with a subject confederate. The naive subjects had also witnessed the two confederates talking together before the session began.

For the experimental task, Ss discussed in groups and then individually wrote answers to two creativity problems. First the subjects, then the judge graded each of these creative answers. Each S kept a record of the grades that he and the judge had assigned to insure the the judge's bias would be noticed. In the experimental sessions the judge assigned an "A" to the subject confederate's intentionally uncreative answer and lower grades to the other answers, disconfirming the Ss' expectations of fairness.

Following the grading of the second creative problem, the judge was excused, and discussion among the subjects was terminated for the duration of the session. At this point a group choice provided the first measure of willingness to act to correct the injustice. Ss chose to participate in either a "creativity test" discussion group or a "judge" discussion group. It was implied that by electing

the "creativity test" discussion group Ss could attempt to correct the unjust situation by making the test more fair. Since the ostensible purpose of the "judge" discussion group was to assign the judge's performance a grade, Ss could obtain personal revenge by choosing to discuss the judge.

After making their choice, the Ss indicated how much they wanted to stay for each discussion group, providing a quantitative group choice measure. Following this, the Ss completed paper and pencil measures designed to reveal the amount of their dissatisfaction with various aspects of the experimental situation. Also included were two additional "activity measures," an opportunity to sign up for a committee set up to achieve fairness in testing creativity and an opportunity to volunteer to return to the experiment to act as judge.

Finally, the group discussion was held. The Ss were partially debriefed and questioned about their suspicions. The control sessions were identical to the experimental sessions, except that the judge showed no favoritism in grading his friend's answer.

Results from 62 male and female students were used to test the hypothesis that idealists would be more dissatisfied and more willing to act to correct injustice. The subjects were students from introductory psychology classes at the Univ. of Del. who participated in the experiment to fulfill a course requirement. Ten experimental and three control sessions with 7 or 8 naive Ss in each session were conducted. The Ss were split into idealists and pragmatists at the median of their idealism-pragmatism scores, 88.

Are idealists more likely to correct an unexpectedly unjust situation? To answer this question, an "activity score" was computed for each S. A maximum score of three was obtained if the S elected all three corrective actions: chose the "creativity test" group discussion in the group choice, signed up for the committee set up to achieve fairness in testing, and volunteered to return as judge (Table 2). In the experimental condition idealists were more likely to volunteer to correct the injustice ($\chi^2 = 8.57$, d.f. = 3, $p < .05$).

Separately the frequency from each measure were of borderline significance. In each case, however, the Ss who made the corrective activity choices had significantly more idealistic mean attitude scores (t = 2.05, 2.16, $p<.05$, group choice and committee; t = 2.83, $p<.01$, return as judge, Table 3). In the group choice measure Ss also indicated how much they wanted to discuss each topic. The results of this quantitative group choice measure replicated and clarified the frequency data from the activity measures. For example, experimental idealists wanted to join the "creativity test" discussion group significantly more than pragmatists (t = 2.79, $p<.01$, Figure 1, left). However, idealists and pragmatists did not differ in desire to join the "judge" discussion group in the experimental condition. Both showed high interest (Figure 1, middle).

The remaining dependent measures are relevant to the prediction of greater dissatisfaction from idealists in an unexpectedly unjust situation. This prediction was borne out by results from a questionnaire which measured satisfaction with the creativity test and its proposed use and grading with future freshmen. Idealists were less satisfied than pragmatists, particularly in the experimental condition (F = 11.27, $p<.01$). Results from a mood semantic differential, an evaluation of the judge, and a grading of the judge failed to show this interaction, however. In the evaluation and grading of the judge there were significant experimental-control main effects. Both idealists and pragmatists derogated and downgraded the judge similarly in the experimental condition.

The results provide some support for the original hypothesis that when expectations of justice are disconfirmed, idealists will be more dissatisfied and more willing to take corrective action than pragmatists. The corrective action portion of the hypothesis received support from the activity data. In terms

of dissatisfaction, the mood data and the evaluations of the judge showed no significant interactions, while the creativity test questionnaire did bear out the prediction.

One possible interpretation of these results is that the actions of the judge in the experimental condition caused idealistic or pragmatic value expectations to become salient to the Ss. Both experimental idealists and pragmatists showed increased negativity toward the judge as the personal cause of their unfair treatment. This was illustrated by the derogating and downgrading of the judge by experimental subjects. Idealists, however, by showing greater dissatisfaction with the creativity test and it proposed use and more willingness to take corrective action reveal a broader motivation than revenge. The effect of the judge's behavior seems to be to create in idealists the realization that the creativity test does not meet their standards of justice, thus leading them to volunteer to act to prevent further injustice.

Thus,idealists do show greater interest in correcting an unexpectedly unjust situation, possibly because they are more dissatisfied. These findings suggest that further testing of the hypothesis and the broader theory would prove fruitful.

Reactions of idealists and pragmatists to expectancy disconfirmation
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TABLE 1.
Differences between idealists and pragmatists.

Idealist	Pragmatist
1. Idealistic (principled) means and end values (e.g. fairness, justice, honesty)	Utilitarian means and end values (e.g. success, adjustment, efficiency)
2. Sees normative behavior as prescriptive	Sees normative behavior as probabilistic
3. Absolute, pervasive ideals	Situation ethics
4. Violations of value-related expectations seen as violation of personal and societal values, leading to personal and social anger	Violation of value-related expectation leads to personal anger only

CG 006 562

TABLE 2.

Number of idealists and pragmatists with each 'activity score' in the experimental and control conditions.

Condition	Activity score[a]	Idealists	Pragmatists
Experimental*	3	4	0
	2	6	2
	1	5	9
	0	5	10
Control	3	2	0
	2	2	5
	1	3	7
	0	1	1

* $X^2 = 8.57$, $p < .05$

a High activity score indicates greater tendency to correct injustice

Table 3

Mean idealism-pragmatism scores of subjects making corrective and non-corrective choices in the "activity" measures.

Activity Measure	Corrective Choice[a]	Non-corrective Choice
Group Choice	Creativity Test	Judge
EXPERIMENTAL*	93.56 (16)[c]	83.58 (24)
Control[b]	83.32 (19)	88.50 (2)
Committee Sign-up	Yes	No
EXPERIMENTAL*	96.33 (9)	85.03 (32)
Control[b]	91.00 (3)	82.61 (18)
Return as Judge	Yes	No
EXPERIMENTAL**	93.94 (17)	82.96 (24)
Control	83.77 (9)	83.54 (13)

Note-- high idealism-pragmatism score indicates idealism.
[a]Corrective choices are those which were intended to restore justice.
[b]The n's under one choice of these Control groups were too small for analysis. This data is presented for comparative purposes.
[c]Numbers in parentheses are cell n's
*$p<.05$
**$p<.01$

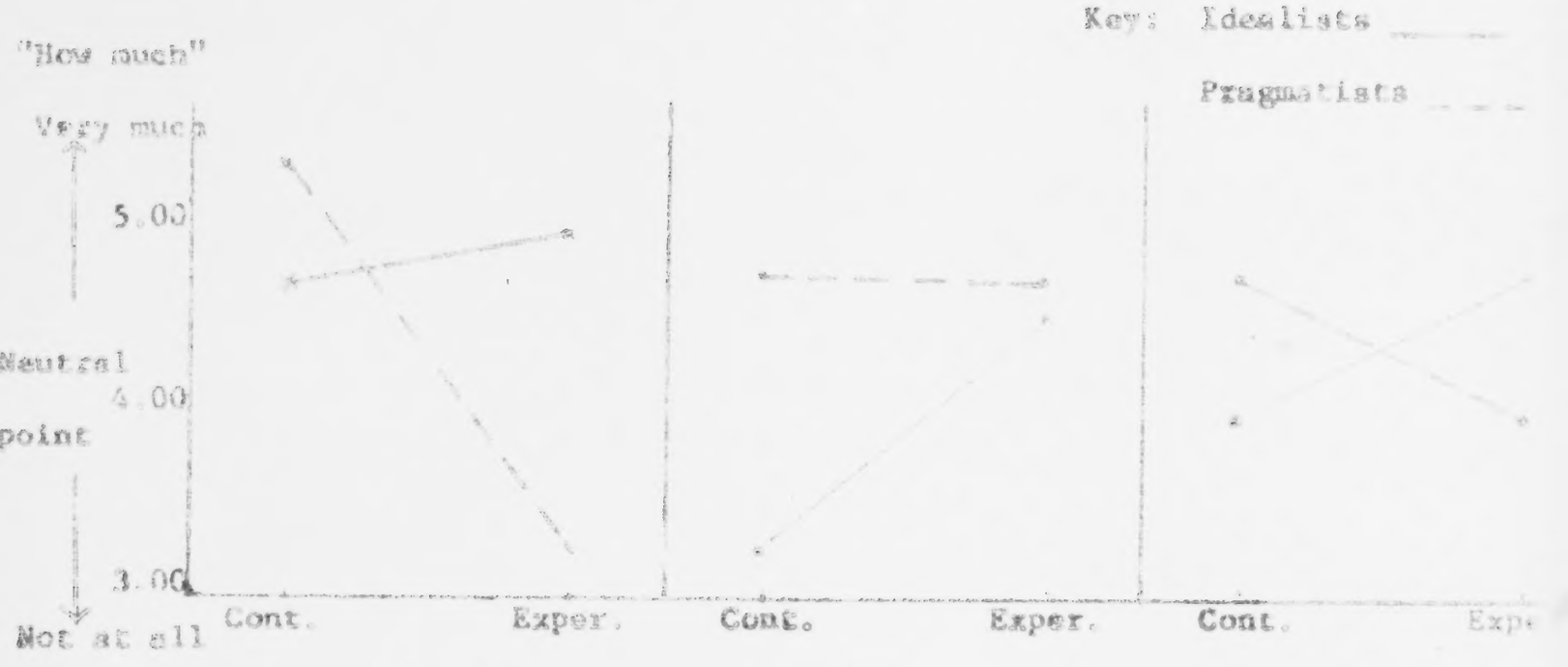

Figure 1. Graphs of interactions from "How much" Judge and and "How much" Creativity Test measures.

Question: "How much to you want to participate in _____ discussion group?"